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DEBT OF HONOUR



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DEBT OF HONOUR

ONE OF THE GREATEST STRATEGIC WITHDRAWALS THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN WAS THE EVACUATION OF THE B.E.F. FROM DUNKIRK IN THE SUMMER OF 1940. ON THE BEACHES, THE REMNANTS OF ONCE-PROUD REGIMENTS WAITED HOPEFULLY FOR THE LITTLE SHIPS THAT WOULD TAKE THEM BACK HOME . . .



TO EASE THE CONGESTION, ONE OR TWO REGIMENTS WERE ORDERED TO FORCE-MARCH TO CHERBOURG TO AWAIT EVACUATION. ONE SUCH REGIMENT FORMED PART OF A FAMOUS SCOTTISH BRIGADE . . .

Chapter 1. ROAD of RETREAT

AS THEY MARCHED THROUGH NORMANDY IN THAT SUMMER OF 1940, THE INFANTRYMEN DID NOT REALISE HOW NEAR THEY WERE TO A PLACE WHERE THEIR REGIMENT HAD ONCE ENDED A CHAPTER IN ITS HISTORY. . . THE UNIT KNOWN AS FERGUSON'S FUSILIERS . . .



WATCHING THE BATTALION SWING PAST, A GROUP OF FRENCH CIVILIANS GRIMACED AT THE SOUND OF THE PIPES . . . **NOT** MUSIC TO **THEIR** EARS. THE SQUALL OF SOUND SEEMED TO ROUSE IN MOST OF THEM A STRANGE RESENTMENT. . .

SALES ECOSSAIS!



THREE OF THE FOOTSLOGGING FUSILIERS PICKED UP THAT COMMENT. THEY ANSWERED TO THE NAMES OF "KNUCKLES" MCNEISH, DOD MURRAY AND STUART NIVEN . . .



KNUCKLES SPOKE. HE AND DOD WERE PRODUCTS OF A SCOTTISH CITY'S BACK STREETS. TOUGH AS THE GRANITE TENEMENTS IN WHICH THEY HAD BEEN REARED. . . VASTLY DIFFERENT IN TYPE FROM THE WELL-SPOKEN STUART NIVEN . . .



THE FUSILIERS' WERE AMONG THE ELEMENTS OF THE B.E.F. DIRECTED TO ESCAPE VIA CHERBOURG.

YOU HAVE A LONG MEMORY, PIERRE BONNIER, TO NURSE SO STRONG A DISLIKE OF SCOTSMEN.

I'M NOT ALONE IN THAT! BUT FOR THEIR KIND, OUR VILLAGE WOULD BE THE MOST PROSPEROUS IN NORMANDY TODAY. PERHAPS EVEN AN IMPORTANT TOWN, INSTEAD OF THE INSIGNIFICANT PLACE IT IS!



THE TWO FRENCHMEN DRIFTED OFF AND MADE THEIR WAY TO A COASTAL HAMLET. . . ORME-SUR-MER. THERE, SEVERAL HOURS LATER, THEY SAW OTHER TROOPS ON THE MARCH. . .



AN OFFICER AT THE HEAD OF THOSE TROOPS STEPPED SWIFTLY TO WHERE PIERRE BONNIER WAS STANDING . . .

I HEARD THAT! UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU, I SPEAK YOUR LANGUAGE! FILTHY GERMANS, YOU CALLED US! TAKE THIS, YOU FRENCH CUR!



SO ORME-SUR-MER CAME UNDER THE HEEL OF THE GERMAN JACKBOOT, WHILE A BATTALION OF SCOTS WERE HOBNAILING THEIR WAY ON TO A TROOPSHIP AT CHERBOURG . . .

WELL, ADJ, WE'RE LEAVING FRANCE IN UNHAPPY CIRCUMSTANCES . . . THE COUNTRY OF OUR BIRTH AS YOU MIGHT SAY!

THE COUNTRY OF OUR BIRTH, SIR? I DON'T THINK I QUITE FOLLOW YOU.



Chapter 2. FOREIGN SERVICE

THE BATTALION COMMANDER WAS A PEPPERY CUSTOMER. LOUDON-GUNN WAS HIS NAME, BUT KNOWN AS "OLD DOUBLE-BARREL" TO HIS MEN.

CONFOUND IT, MAXWELL, DON'T YOU KNOW THIS UNIT WAS RAISED IN FRANCE BEFORE THE BRITISH ARMY EVER CAME INTO EXISTENCE? YOU'D BETTER BRUSH UP ON YOUR REGIMENTAL HISTORY, MAN!

"OLD DOUBLE-BARREL" WAS GOING BACK A LONG WAY. BUT THEN, NO ARMY LAYS MORE STORE BY TRADITION THAN THE BRITISH. . . AND NO UNIT IN IT COULD POINT TO A RECORD SO UNIQUE AS "FERGUSON'S FUSILIERS".

"FUSILIERS DE FERGUSON". SUCH WAS THE ORIGINAL TITLE OF THE REGIMENT, COMPOSED OF SCOTS WHO HAD LEFT THEIR NATIVE LAND TO ENLIST AS SOLDIERS-OF-FORTUNE IN THE FRENCH ARMY. . .



THEIR COLONEL WAS ADAM FERGUSON. DEDICATED TO THE MILITARY PROFESSION, HE HAD FORMED THE REGIMENT AND FILLED ITS RANKS WITH COMPATRIOTS AS EAGER TO SEEK ADVENTURE AS HIMSELF.

FAITH, WE'VE MADE OUR MARK IN THIS FOREIGN LAND. NO FRENCHMAN COULD DENY THAT WE'VE WON HIGH RENOWN IN DEFENDING IT AGAINST ITS ENEMIES.



IN THOSE DAYS WHEN IT WAS CUSTOMARY FOR CONTINENTAL MONARCHS TO HIRE VOLUNTEERS FROM OTHER NATIONS, THERE HAD NEVER BEEN ANY DIFFICULTY IN MAINTAINING A STEADY FLOW OF RECRUITS FROM SCOTLAND . . .

UNHAPPILY, THE FRENCH KING DOES NOT SEEM TO APPRECIATE WHAT WE'VE DONE FOR HIM OVER THE YEARS . . . NOT TO THE EXTENT OF LOOSENING THE TREASURY'S PURSE STRINGS TOO READILY AT ALL EVENTS . . .



BUT NOW THE "FUSILIERS DE FERGUSON" WERE DEPARTING. THEIR HOMETLAND AND ENGLAND HAD UNITED UNDER A SCOTTISH SOVEREIGN. A BRITISH ARMY WAS BEING CREATED, AND TO A MAN, THEY HAD ELECTED TO JOIN IT. . .



ONE OF THE FUSILIERS CALLED OUT. . . MURDO TAGGART, A HARD-BITTEN FELLOW WITH A FACE LIKE LEATHER. A WILD ONE, RING-LEADER OF A CLIQUE WHO HAD NOT TAKEN TOO KINDLY TO DISCIPLINE. . .



THE SCOTS MADE CAMP; THE BULK OF THEM WILLING ENOUGH TO EAT THE PLAIN FARE OF THEIR COMMISSARIAT . . . BUT NOT TAGGART. HE FANCIED MORE PALATABLE FOOD . . .



TAGGART AND THE OTHERS TRAMPED INTO ORME-SUR-MER AND ARRIVED AT THE INN. TAGGART SPOKE IN HEAVILY-ACCENTED FRENCH TO ITS PROPRIETOR . . . A CERTAIN JEAN BONNIER . . .



THE BEAM OF WELCOME VANISHED FROM JEAN BONNIER'S PLUMP FACE. . . SWIFTLY AS AN ERROR WIPED OFF A SLATE BY THE RUB OF A WET RAG. . .

TOMORROW, MONSIEUR? AH, NO, I DO NOT FURNISH YOU WITH THE BEST IN MY HOUSE IF YOU CANNOT PAY NOW. I SERVE YOU WITH NOTHING TILL I SEE THE COLOUR OF YOUR MONEY.

LISTEN, YOUR KING OWES US SIX MONTHS' WAGES. HIS TREASURER'S PROMISED THE CASH WILL BE HERE TOMORROW BEFORE WE SAIL. COME PATRON. . .

THE INNKEEPER INTERRUPTED, WITH ILL-CHOSEN WORDS. . .

MY KING. . . HIS TREASURER. . . WHAT DO I CARE FOR THEM OR ANY PROMISES? I TRUST NO ONE, LEAST OF ALL A KING'S TREASURER. NO, LEAST OF ALL, A SOLDIER LIKE YOU. A FOREIGNER AT THAT!

BY HEAVENS, THIS FAT MOUNSEER IS ASKING FOR THE WEIGHT OF MY FIST IF EVER A MAN DID. . . AND HE'S GAUN TO GET IT!

ONE MOMENT JEAN BONNIER WAS STANDING THERE. THE NEXT, HE WAS HURLING BACKWARDS UNDER THE IMPACT OF A BLOW THAT NEARLY UNHINGED HIS JAW . . .



MINE HOST'S FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN SWARMED ANGRILY TOWARDS TAGGART AND HIS PARTY. THE SCOTS PROMPTLY LAID INTO THEM AND STARTED TOSSING THEM OUT INTO THE STREET . . .



MURDO TAGGART WAS IN NO MOOD TO FEEL CONCERN FOR JEAN BONNIER'S ESTABLISHMENT . . .

LET IT BURN! WHAT OF IT! WE'LL TAK' WHAT WE NEED FROM IT AND GO!



THE FRENCHMEN DISPOSED OF THE BAND OF MERCENARIES HELPED THEMSELVES FROM THE INN'S STORE OF VICTUALS AND CLUMPED OFF WITH THEIR BOOTY . . .

AU SECOURS! HELP! MY INN IS ABLAZE! I SHALL BE RUINED!



UNLUCKILY, A STIFF WIND WAS BLOWING. IT FANNED THE FLAMES AND ENSURED DESTRUCTION . . . AND NOT JUST OF JEAN BONNIER'S INN ALONE . . .

YON'S A BRAV SIGHT. IT SHOULD TEACH TH. FRENCHMEN DOON THERE TO BE CIVIL TO THEM THAT FIGHTS AND WINS THEIR BATTLES FOR THEM.



THE FIRE SWEEPED THROUGH ORME-SUR-MER'S TIMBER HOUSES WITH DEVASTATING RAPIDITY. ALL EFFORTS TO SAVE THE VILLAGE WERE IN VAIN, EVEN THOUGH COLONEL FERGUSON PROVIDED ALL POSSIBLE AID. . .

AS I HAVE EXPLAINED TO THE MAYOR, SOME OF THE SOLDIERS UNDER YOUR COMMAND ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS!

SO I HEAR! AND THEY WILL ANSWER FOR IT!

TAGGART AND HIS CRONIES DID ANSWER FOR IT. THEY EMBARKED FOR SCOTLAND IN FETTERS . . . AND MINUS EVERY FRANC OF THE PAY DUE TO THEM. . .

MONSIEUR LE MAIRE, THE CULPRITS BACK-PAY IS IN THESE BAGS. . . ALSO MONEY WHICH I AND THE REST OF MY MEN HAVE CONTRIBUTED.

DO NOT EXPECT GRATITUDE, COLONEL! TEN YEARS PAY FOR YOUR ENTIRE REGIMENT COULD NOT RECOMPENSE US FOR THE DAMAGE DONE!



THE MAYOR OF THAT FRENCH COMMUNITY SPOKE THE TRUTH. A THRIVING VILLAGE WHICH HAD BEEN WELL ON THE WAY TO BECOMING AN IMPORTANT TOWN HAD BEEN VIRTUALLY REDUCED TO ASHES...

A PITY WE SHOULD HAVE ENDED OUR SERVICE IN FRANCE ON SUCH A NOTE OF ILL-REPUTE.



A NOTE OF ILL-REPUTE? THAT WAS AN UNDERSTATEMENT. THE INHABITANTS OF ORME-SUR-MER FAIRLY HOWLED THEIR HATRED... AND NONE MORE LOUDLY THAN JEAN BONNIER...

A BAS LES ECOSSAIS! DOWN WITH THE SCOTS!

MAY THEIR SHIP SINK UNDER THEM!



BUT NO MISHAP BEFELL THE "FUSILIERS DE FERGUSON" ON THE HOMEWARD VOYAGE. SOME TIME AFTER, IN NEW UNIFORMS, THEY PARADED ON EDINBURGH CASTLE'S ESPLANADE TO TAKE A RESOUNDING OATH OF ALLEGIANCE...

REPEAT AFTER ME! WE SWEAR TO UPHOLD AND DEFEND THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN...



Chapter 3.

ASSAULT

THE UNIT HAD SERVED IN MANY CAMPAIGNS SINCE THAT FAR-OFF DAY IN EDINBURGH. LIKE OTHERS, IT HAD UNDERGONE CHANGES OF TITLE THROUGH THE YEARS, BUT MEN IN IT HAD ALWAYS CLUNG TO ITS OLD NAME . . .

ONE THING PUZZLES ME. YOUR MOB'S THE FIRST BATTALION OF A FAMOUS REGIMENT, YET YOU CALL YOURSELVES FERGUSON'S FUSILIERS. WHY?

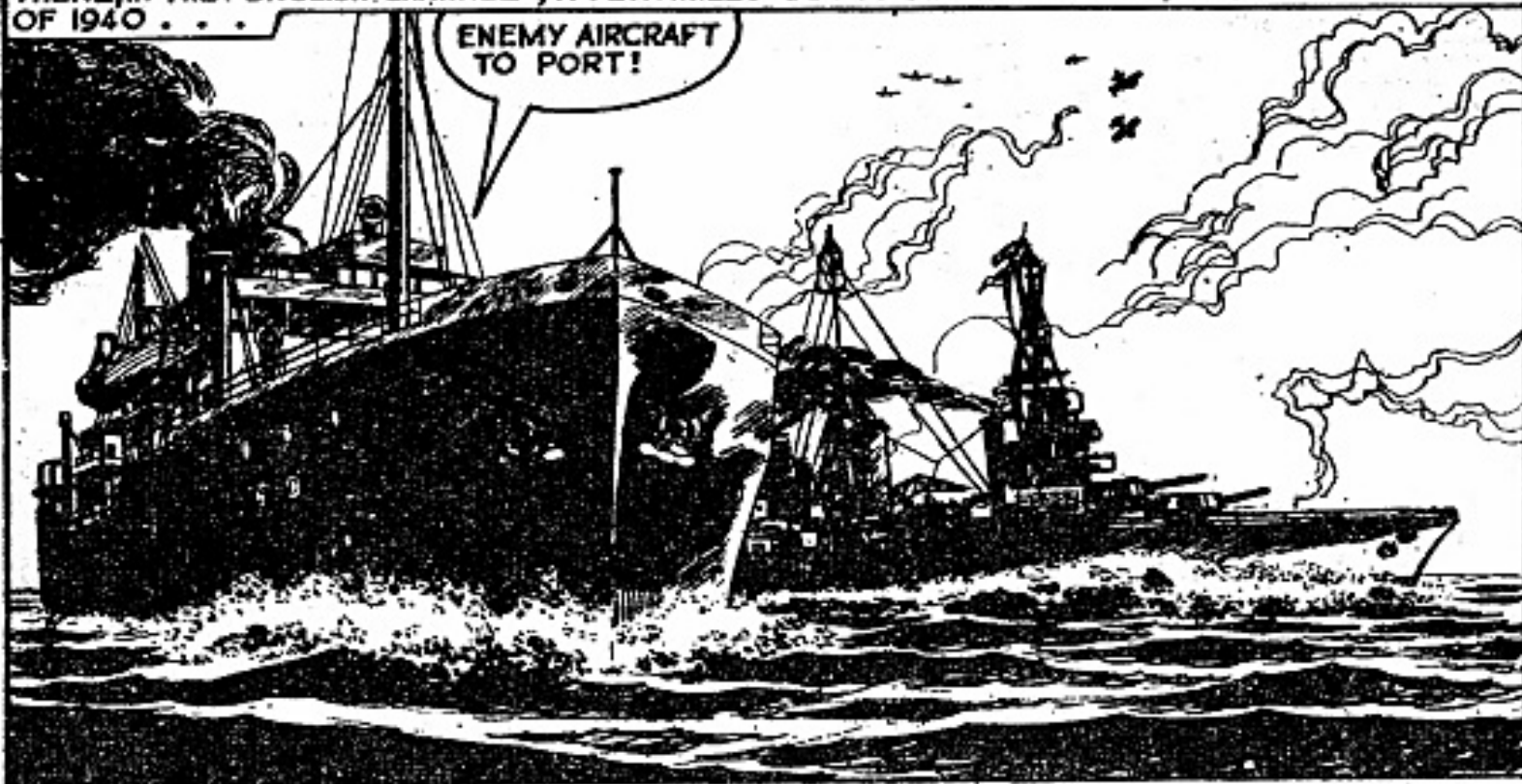
WELL, I CANNA RIGHTLY SAY. CAN YOU TELL HIM, DOD?

WEE MURRAY COULD NOT PROVIDE THE ANSWER. YOU MIGHT AS WELL HAVE ASKED HIM WHY THE NICKNAME "DOD" WAS COMMONLY APPLIED IN SCOTLAND TO ANYONE CHRISTENED GEORGE.

I HAVENA A CLUE, KNUCK.

I BELIEVE AN ADAM FERGUSON WAS THIS UNIT'S FIRST COMMANDING OFFICER . . . THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO . . .

THAT WAS WHERE THE DISCOURSE ON REGIMENTAL HISTORY WAS ABRUPTLY INTERRUPTED . . . THERE, IN THE ENGLISH CHANNEL, A FEW MILES OUT FROM CHERBOURG, ON THAT JUNE DAY OF 1940 . . .



A PACK OF STUKAS DIVED FROM THE CLOUDS. THE FIRST OF THEM SWEEPED DOWN, GUNS HAMMERING. WITH BULLETS LASHING AROUND HIM, OLD DOUBLE-BARREL WHIRLED IN A FURY OF INDIGNATION . . .

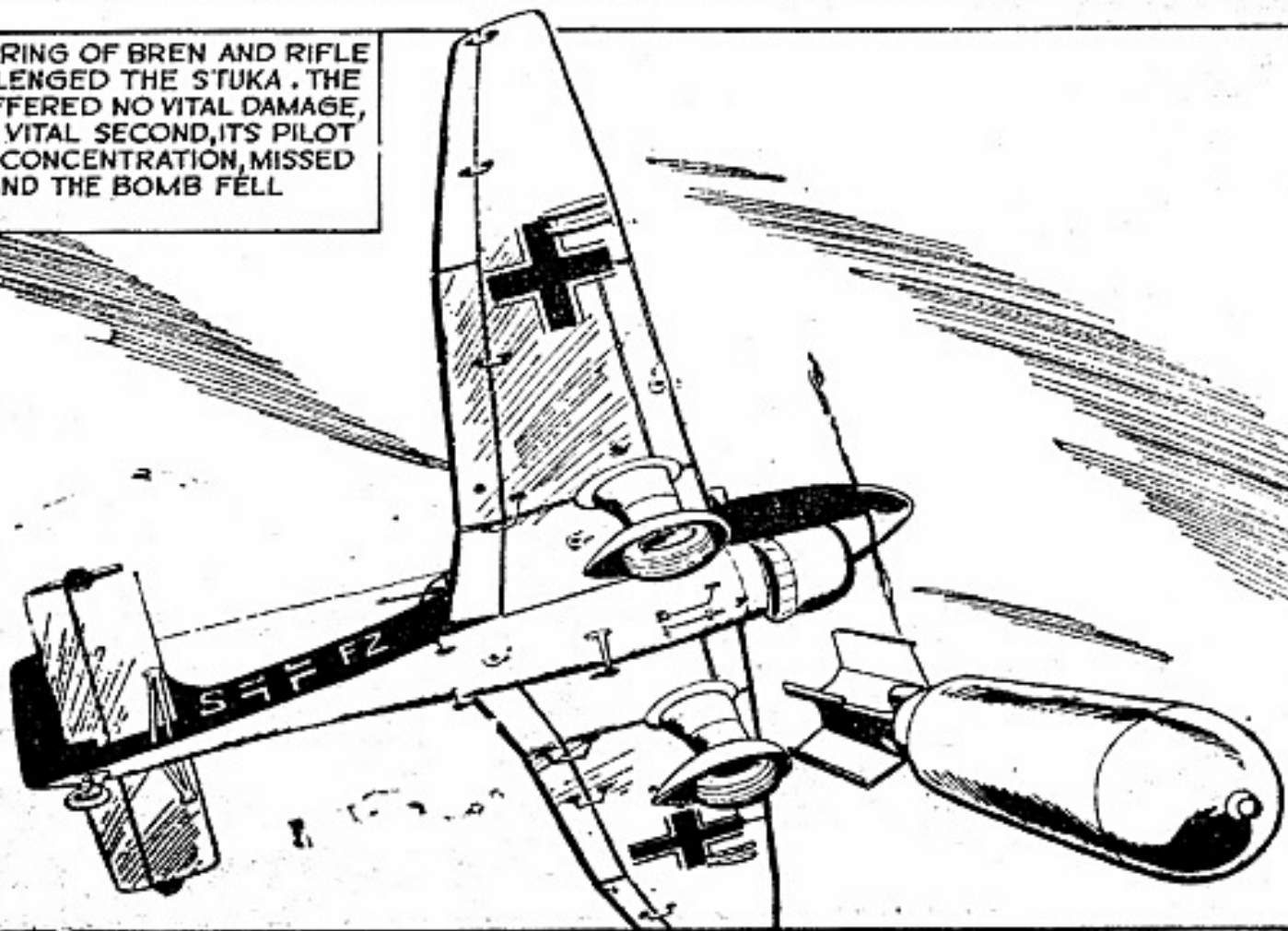


THE COLONEL'S ASH STICK WHACKED DOWN SMARTLY
AND A TARDY BREN-GUNNER JUMPED TO OBEY. . .

DON'T JUST STAND
THERE, MCWHIRTER!
GET CRACKING WITH
THAT BREN!
MOVE!

AYE, SIR!
RIGHT YEZ
ARE, SIR!

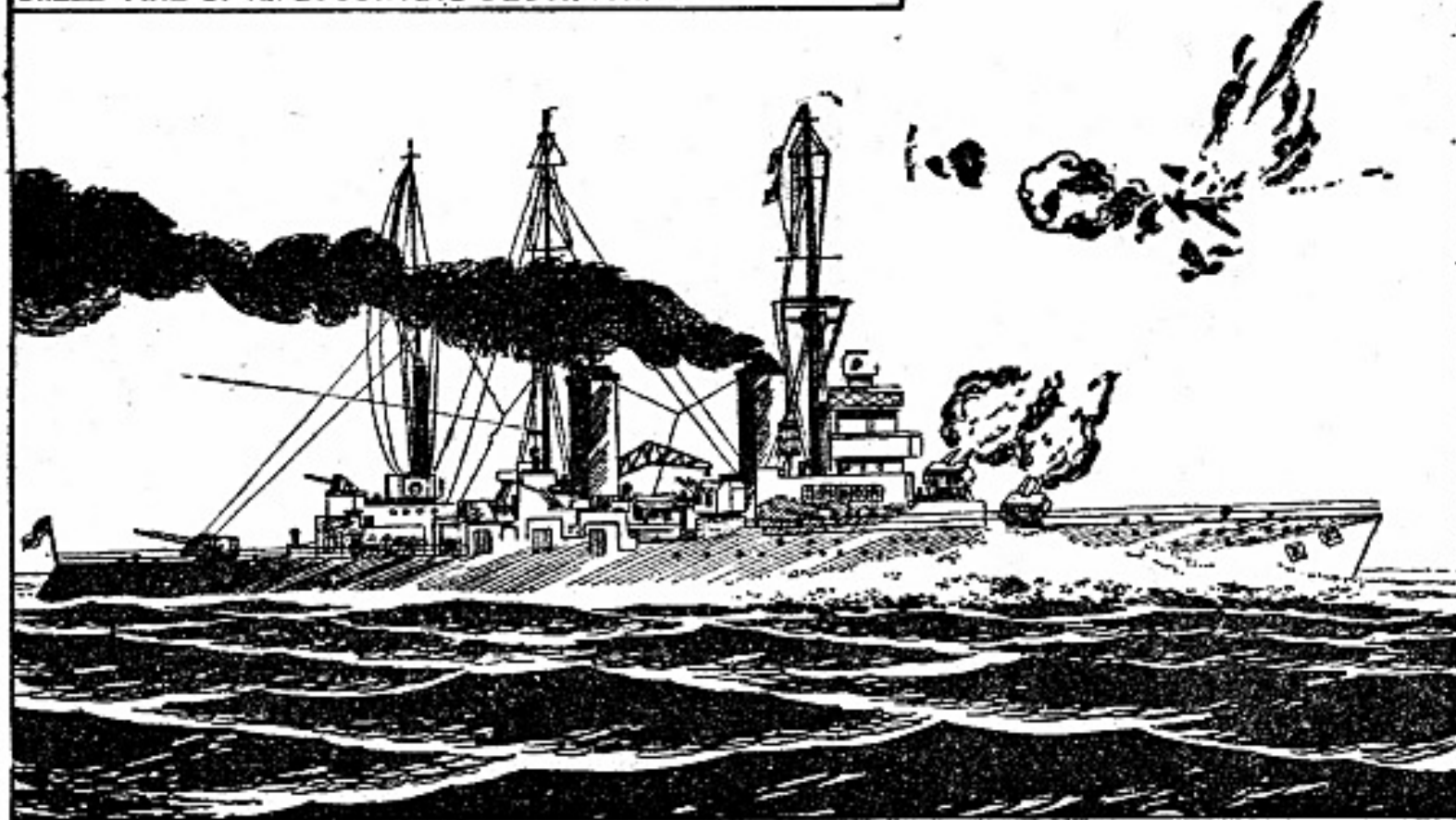
A SMATTERING OF BREN AND RIFLE
FIRE CHALLENGED THE STUKA. THE
PLANE SUFFERED NO VITAL DAMAGE,
BUT FOR A VITAL SECOND, ITS PILOT
LOST HIS CONCENTRATION, MISSED
HIS AIM, AND THE BOMB FELL
WIDE . . .



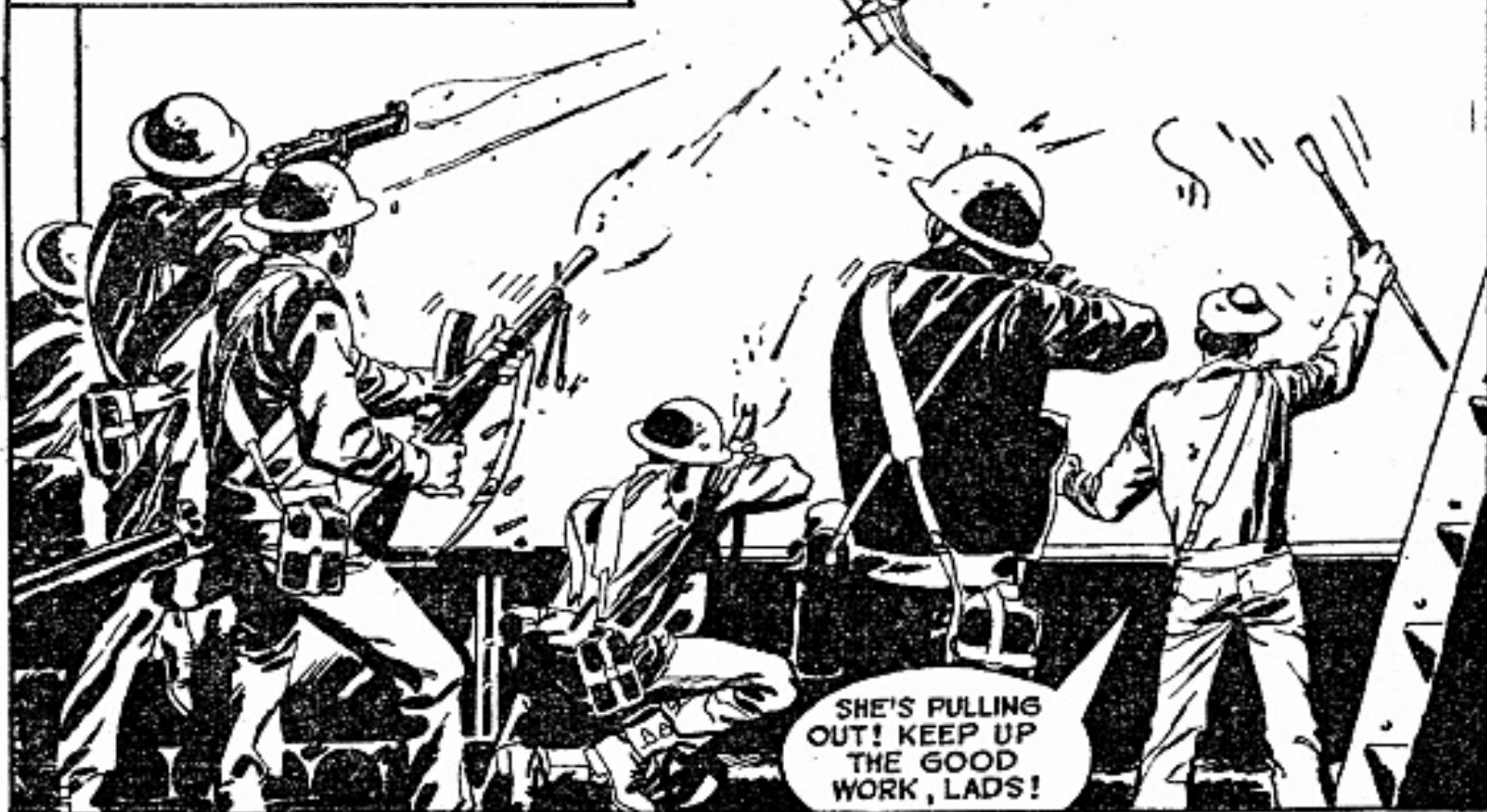
THE SEA ERUPTED ALONGSIDE THE TROOPSHIP. THE VESSEL HEELED TO THE SHOCK, THEN SHUDDERED UNDER THE CRASHING WALL OF WATER.



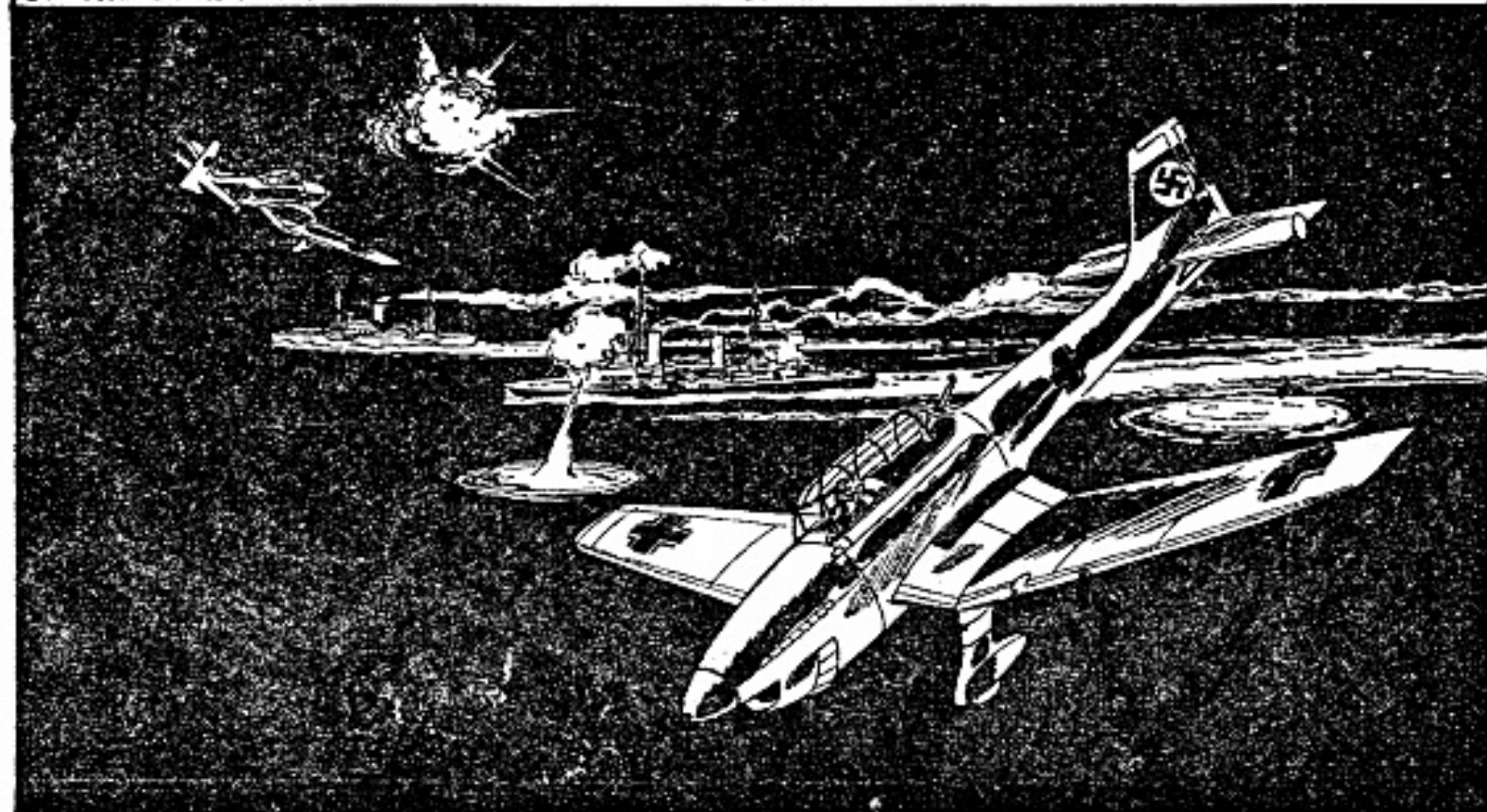
THE GERMAN PLANE SCREAMED LOW OVER ITS PREY. . . AND FLEW STRAIGHT INTO THE FAST AND ACCURATE SHELL-FIRE OF AN ESCORTING DESTROYER.



A SECOND STUKA DELIVERED AN ATTACK, BUT BY NOW, THE STENTORIAN VOICE OF THE FUSILIERS' COLONEL HAD THE BRENGUNNERS AND RIFLEMEN OF HIS ENTIRE BATTALION ON THE ALERT.



THE BOMB DROPPED BY THE SECOND STUKA WAS WELL WIDE OF THE MARK. HARRIED BY SMALL-ARMS FIRE FROM THE TROOPSHIP AND BY THE DESTROYER'S HEAVY BARRAGE, NONE OF THE OTHER NAZI AIRCRAFT MANAGED TO SCORE ANY HITS . . .



THE ENEMY PLANES FINALLY DREW OFF. . . BUT NOT BEFORE THE BRITISH TROOPSHIP'S ESCORT HAD CLAWED DOWN A FURTHER VICTIM FROM AMONG THEM. . .

THEY'VE HAD ENOUGH, ADJ! AND THE FUSILIERS CAN TAKE SOME OF THE CREDIT!



THE FUSILIERS CROSSED THE CHANNEL WITHOUT FURTHER INCIDENT. FORTY-EIGHT HOURS LATER, THEY WERE IN POSITION ALONG A STRETCH OF COAST, SOMEWHERE IN THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND.

D'YE THINK THE JERRIES'LL HAE A BASH?

I HOPE SO, THERE'S SIX HUNNER O' US ALL SET TO FEED THEM TO THE FISHES!



KNUCKLES AND THE LIKES OF HIM WERE SPOILING FOR A FIGHT. ONLY, IN THOSE DARK DAYS WHEN BRITAIN STOOD ALONE AGAINST THE MIGHT OF GERMANY, THE ARMY'S ROLE WAS A PASSIVE ONE . . .

AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, THOSE PLANES ARE A MIXED BATCH OF DORNIER BOMBERS AND MESSERSCHMITT FIGHTERS, ADJ.



IT WAS THE LUFTWAFFE WHICH CALLED THE TUNE AFTER FRANCE'S SURRENDER . . . AND IT WAS THE VALIANT PILOTS OF THE R.A.F. WHO THREW THAT TUNE OUT OF RHYTHM!



LOOK, SIR!
HURRICANES!

FERGUSON'S FUSILIERS HAD A GRANDSTAND VIEW OF ONE OF THE FIRST CLASHES IN A HISTORIC CONFLICT . . . LATER TO BECOME KNOWN AS THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN . . .



THE BRITISH FIGHTERS WERE OUTNUMBERED, YET THE GERMAN FORMATIONS WERE BROKEN UP AND DRIVEN BACK TOWARDS OCCUPIED FRANCE IN IGNOMINIOUS ROUT . . .



BIG KNUCKLES MCNEISH ECHOED THE NOTE OF ENVY IN DOD'S VOICE . . .

WE SHOULD'VE JOINED THE R.A.F. INSTEAD OF THE SOJERS. BUT WHAT CHANCE WOULD NUMSKULLS LIKE YOU AND ME EVER HAVE OF GETTING TO BE PILOTS, DOD.

YE'RE RIGHT. NOW STU MIGHT STAND A CHANCE.



STUART SHOOK HIS HEAD EMPHATICALLY. . .

NOT ON YOUR SWEET LIFE! FLYING DOESN'T APPEAL TO ME. I CAN'T STAND HEIGHTS. I'D RATHER KEEP MY TWO FEET ON THE GROUND, THANK YOU!



THE SUBJECT WAS DROPPED AND THE CONVERSATION FORGOTTEN . . . UNTIL ONE DAY, SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN HAD ENDED IN THE REPULSE OF THE LUFTWAFFE . . .

HEY, YOUSE LADS, HAVE YE HEARD THE LATEST? **WE'RE TO BE PARATROOPERS!** I HAD THE TIP OFF FROM A BATTALION ORDERLY-ROOM CLERK.



KNUCKLES AND DOD DID NOT BELIEVE IT AND STUART DID NOT WANT TO BELIEVE IT. IT WAS RIGHT ENOUGH, THOUGH. AT THAT VERY MOMENT, LOUDON-GUNN WAS DISCUSSING THE PROJECT WITH A MAJOR-GENERAL AT THE WAR OFFICE. . .

YES, COLONEL, WE WANT OFFICERS AND OTHER RANKS WHO ARE WILLING TO UNDERGO PARACHUTE TRAINING. BUT WE WANT VOLUNTEERS, NOT PRESSED MEN.

MY FUSILIERS WILL VOLUNTEER TO A MAN, SIR. . . PROVIDED THERE'S A GUARANTEE WE'LL RETAIN OUR IDENTITY.

LOUDON-GUNN RECEIVED THE ASSURANCE FOR WHICH HE ASKED. . . PLUS A STRONG REMINDER THAT HE MUST GIVE EVERYONE UNDER HIS COMMAND FREEDOM OF CHOICE. . . WHICH HE DID, IN HIS OWN FIRECRACKER FASHION. . .

I KNOW EVERY ONE OF YOU BY NAME AND CHARACTER AND I'M CERTAIN I CAN COUNT ON YOU ALL. I KNOW THERE'S NOT A MAN HERE WHO'LL BACK AWAY FROM WHAT I HAVE IN MIND.



THE COLONEL ANNOUNCED HIS PROPOSAL THAT THE UNIT SHOULD APPLY COLLECTIVELY FOR PARACHUTE TRAINING. HE GLARED ALONG THE RANKS . . .

OF COURSE, ALL OF YOU ARE AT LIBERTY TO MAKE YOUR OWN DECISIONS THE CALL IS FOR VOLUNTEERS.

OLD DOUBLE-BARREL PAUSED . . .

NATURALLY I EXPECT A HUNDRED PER CENT VOTE-IN-FAVOUR FROM ALL COMPANIES. BUT ANYONE LACKING THE GUTS TO FACE UP TO OUR NEW ROLE, CAN APPLY TO ME PERSONALLY TOMORROW FOR AN IMMEDIATE TRANSFER FROM THIS UNIT.

WITH A VOICE LIKE A FOGHORN, HE BLARED THE ORDER TO DISMISS AND THE MEN SPLIT UP INTO GROUPS TO DISCUSS THE PRONOUNCEMENT HE HAD MADE . . .

THAT WAS AN ULTIMATUM, NOT A CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

SUITS ME! I'M BRASSSED OFF WI' COASTAL DEFENCE. ANYTHING FOR A BIT O' EXCITEMENT!

ALMOST THE ENTIRE UNIT WAS OF THE SAME MIND AS KNUCKLES. STUART WAS AMONG THE VERY FEW EXCEPTIONS. BUT NOT UNTIL THAT NIGHT DID HE MAKE HIS FINAL DECISION.

WHAT'S IT TO BE, STU?
ARE YE GAUN TO SEE
AULD DOBBLE-BARREL
AND APPLY FOR A
TRANSFER?

HELP ME!!

YOUR BLOOD!

NO, HANG IT,
I HAVEN'T THE NERVE
TO TELL HIM I'M SCARED
OF HEIGHTS! ANYWAY, I
WANT TO STICK WITH
THE BATTALION.

THERE WAS ANOTHER REASON FOR STUART'S DECISION, THOUGH HE DID NOT TOUCH ON IT. IT WAS A RELUCTANCE TO BE PARTED FROM KNUCKLES MCNEISH AND DOD MURRAY...

GOOD
FOR YOU,
PAL!

JUST THE SAME,
THE VERY IDEA OF
JUMPING FROM A PLANE
BRINGS ME OUT IN
A COLD SWEAT!

IT DOES?
MAN, I'M LOOKIN'
FORWARD TO IT. AND
SO WILL YOU, WHEN YOU
GET USED TO THE IDEA.

SYNTHETIC TRAINING ON THE GROUND . . . TUITION ON HOW TO LAND AND HOW TO COLLAPSE A PARACHUTE ON TOUCH-DOWN . . . THE FUSILIERS WENT THROUGH THE DRILL PHASE BY PHASE. THEN CAME THE DAY OF THEIR INITIAL ORDEAL.



SOME OF THE TRAINEES LOOKED KEYED-UP, TENSE . . . NONE MORE SO THAN STUART NIVEN. HE WAS ENVIOUS OF KNUCKLES AND DOD, WHO WERE CLEARLY LOOKING FORWARD TO THE EXPERIENCE.



Debt of Honour


SOON, THE BIG TROOP-CARRYING AIRCRAFT WERE ON THE MOVE. THE ONE OCCUPIED BY STUART AND HIS COMRADES WAS THE LAST TO TAKE OFF.



KNUCKLES GRINNED ENCOURAGINGLY. . .



AT A THOUSAND FEET, A RED LIGHT BY THE OPEN DOORWAY TURNED GREEN. SO DID THE FACE OF KNUCKLES MCNEISH AS HE LOOKED DOWN!



COME ON,
JOCK, OUT YOU GO!
WHAT ARE YOU
WAITING FOR?

CRIVVENS!
OOOOH!

THE JUMP MASTER WAS AN ENGLISHMAN. HE
LOOKED TO DOD FOR INTERPRETATION. . .



WHAT'S THE
MATTER?

NOTHING
MUCH. . . HE NEEDS
A WEE BIT SHOVE
. . . LIKE THIS!

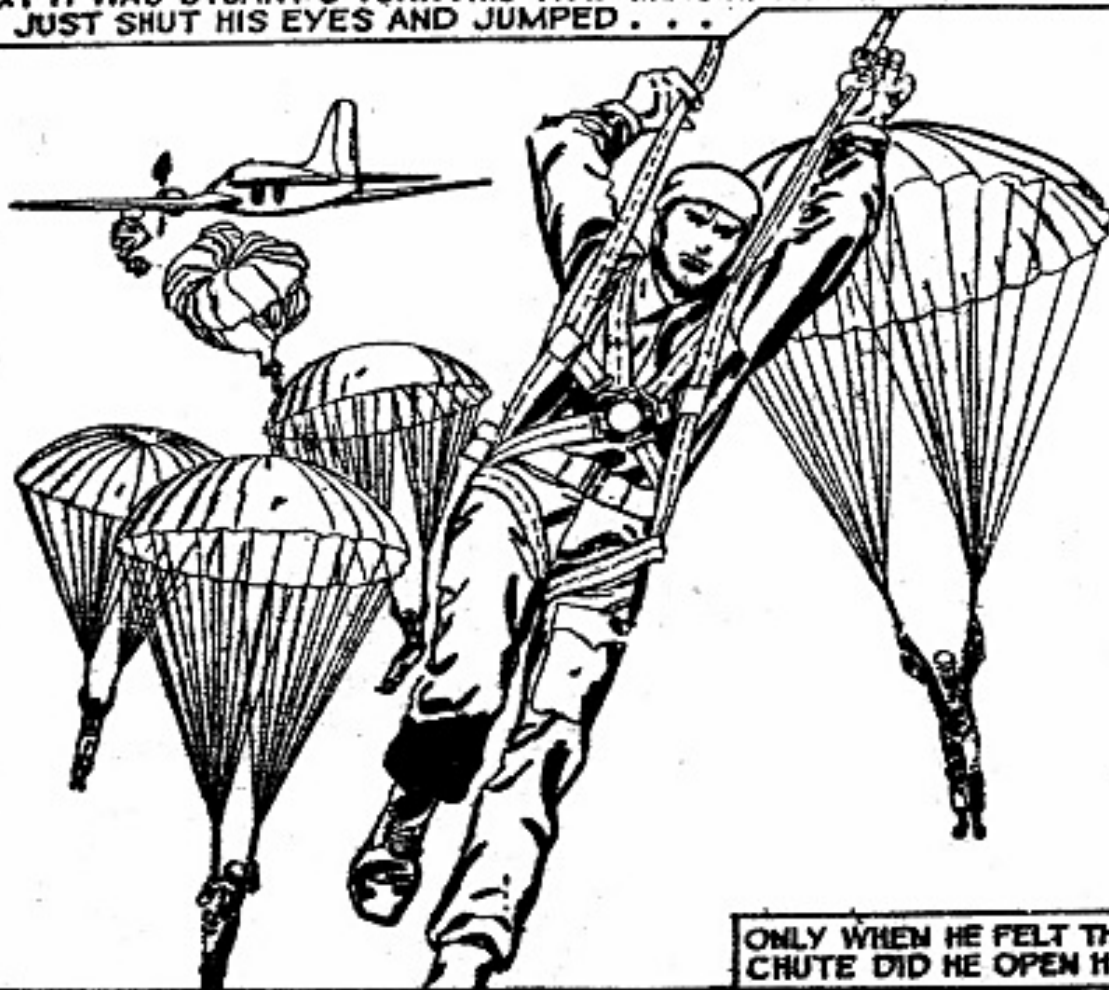
KNUCKLES SPILLED FORTH WITH A HOWL, UNDER THE THRUST OF DOD'S BOOT. . .



SMIRKING, DOD STEPPED FORWARD. . . SAW THE PANORAMA OF THE LANDSCAPE AWAY BELOW, AND RECOILED. HE HAD TO BE FORCIBLY JETTISONED FROM THE AIRCRAFT AS WELL. . .



NEXT IT WAS STUART'S TURN. HIS VIVID IMAGINATION HAD WARNED HIM WHAT TO EXPECT. HE JUST SHUT HIS EYES AND JUMPED. . .



ONLY WHEN HE FELT THE JERK OF HIS OPENING CHUTE DID HE OPEN HIS EYES.

SERENELY, HE FLOATED TO THE GROUND. . .



DOD AND KNUCKLES HAD FULLY RECOVERED FROM THEIR MOMENTARY PANIC IN THE AIRCRAFT. THEY WERE IN FINE FETTER WHEN STUART JOINED THEM.

JINGS! THAT WAS GREAT...
THOUGH I'LL ADMIT I HAD AN
ATTACK O' THE SHIVERS WHEN
I TOOK A
SQUINT THROUGH
YON DOORWAY!

SO DID I. BUT I'D LIKE NOTHING BETTER
THAN TO GET UP THERE AND MAKE
ANOTHER JUMP!

HERE'S THE
COLONEL.



LOUDON-GUNN WAS GOING ROUND CHECKING UP
ON HIS MEN. HE HAD BEEN THE FIRST TO
DROP.

WELL, BOYS,
HOW'D IT GO?


KNUCKLES ANSWERED FOR HIMSELF AND
HIS TWO FRIENDS...

GRAND, SIR!
BY CRICKEY, I'M
JUST LIVIN' FOR
THE DAY WHEN
WE'RE UNLOADED
ON THE
JERRIES!

A COMMENDABLE
SENTIMENT, MCNEISH.
BUT WE'VE A LOT TO
LEARN YET BEFORE
WE TAKE THE
OFFENSIVE.




FULL-SCALE OPERATIONS BY BRITISH AIRBORNE FORCES WERE A REMOTE POSSIBILITY AT THAT STAGE IN THE WAR. NEVERTHELESS, WITHIN A FEW MONTHS, THE FUSILIERS WERE EARMARKED FOR A LIMITED SORTIE.



GENTLEMEN, I'M HAPPY TO TELL YOU OUR BATTALION HAS BEEN ELECTED TO CO-OPERATE WITH COMMANDO UNITS IN A CROSS-CHANNEL RAID ON VITAL ENEMY INSTALLATIONS.


The illustration shows a British officer in uniform, seen from the back, addressing a group of seven other officers seated at a long table. They are in a dimly lit room, possibly a command center, with a map or document on the table. The officer is holding a pointer stick.

LOUDON-GUNN OUTLINED THE NATURE OF THE ENTERPRISE TO HIS SUBORDINATE OFFICERS, THEN ASSEMBLED THEM AROUND A SAND-MODEL TABLE.



OUR TASK WILL BE TO COVER THE COMMANDO UNITS, THAT WILL ENTAIL THE MOPPING-UP OF NAZI TROOPS HERE, SOUTH OF A HAMLET CALLED ORME-SUR-MER.

The illustration shows the same officer from the previous panel, now pointing with a stick to a sand model on a table. The sand model depicts a landscape with a river and some structures. The officer is looking down at the model.



THAT'S FAMILIAR GROUND FOR US, SIR. WE MARCHED OVER IT IN 'FORTY. WE CROSSED THAT BRIDGE SHOWN THERE... ON OUR WAY TO CHERBOURG.

A close-up of a British officer's face, looking towards the sand model. He is wearing a beret and has a serious expression.

OLD DOUBLE-BARREL NODDED. KNOWN TO BE GUARDED BY NAZI PATROLS, THE BRIDGE WAS A KEY FACTOR IN THE BATTALION'S MISSION.

I'M GLAD YOU REMEMBER THE BRIDGE IN QUESTION, MISTER BRODIE. OUR BATTLE PLAN

INVOLVES ITS DESTRUCTION. YOUR PLATOON WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THIS...

HE WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THE WHOLE OPERATION IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL. AT THE END OF THE BRIEFING...

WE WITHDRAW TO THE EAST OF ORME-SUR-MER AND LINK UP WITH THE COMMANDO UNITS... FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

TO EMBARK WITH THEM ON THE LANDING-CRAFT THEY'LL BE USING, OF COURSE!



FOR THE BATTALION, A PERIOD OF INTENSE ACTIVITY ENSUED.


OKAY, NINE PLATOON! PILE OUT!



CRAFT "88"
AMMUNITION

LIEUTENANT BRODIE'S PLATOON WAS AMONG THE EARLIEST ARRIVALS AT THE AIRFIELD FROM WHICH THE FUSILIERS WERE TO TAKE OFF. KNUCKLES, DOD AND STUART WERE RIFLEMEN IN THAT PLATOON...

STAND EASY. WE STAY PUT TILL WE'RE GUIDED OUT TO OUR ALLOTTED PLANES. EACH MAN WILL CHECK HIS GEAR. YOU KNOW THE DRILL.



THE MINUTES DRAGGED BY LEADENLY, BUT AT LAST THE BATTALION WAS SETTLED IN THE BIG TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT.

A FREE RIDE WIT
FIREWORKS AT THE
END OF IT. WHAT
MORE COULD YE
WANT DOD?

A RETURN TICKET, YE MUCKLE
'GREAT BUNDERHEAD?



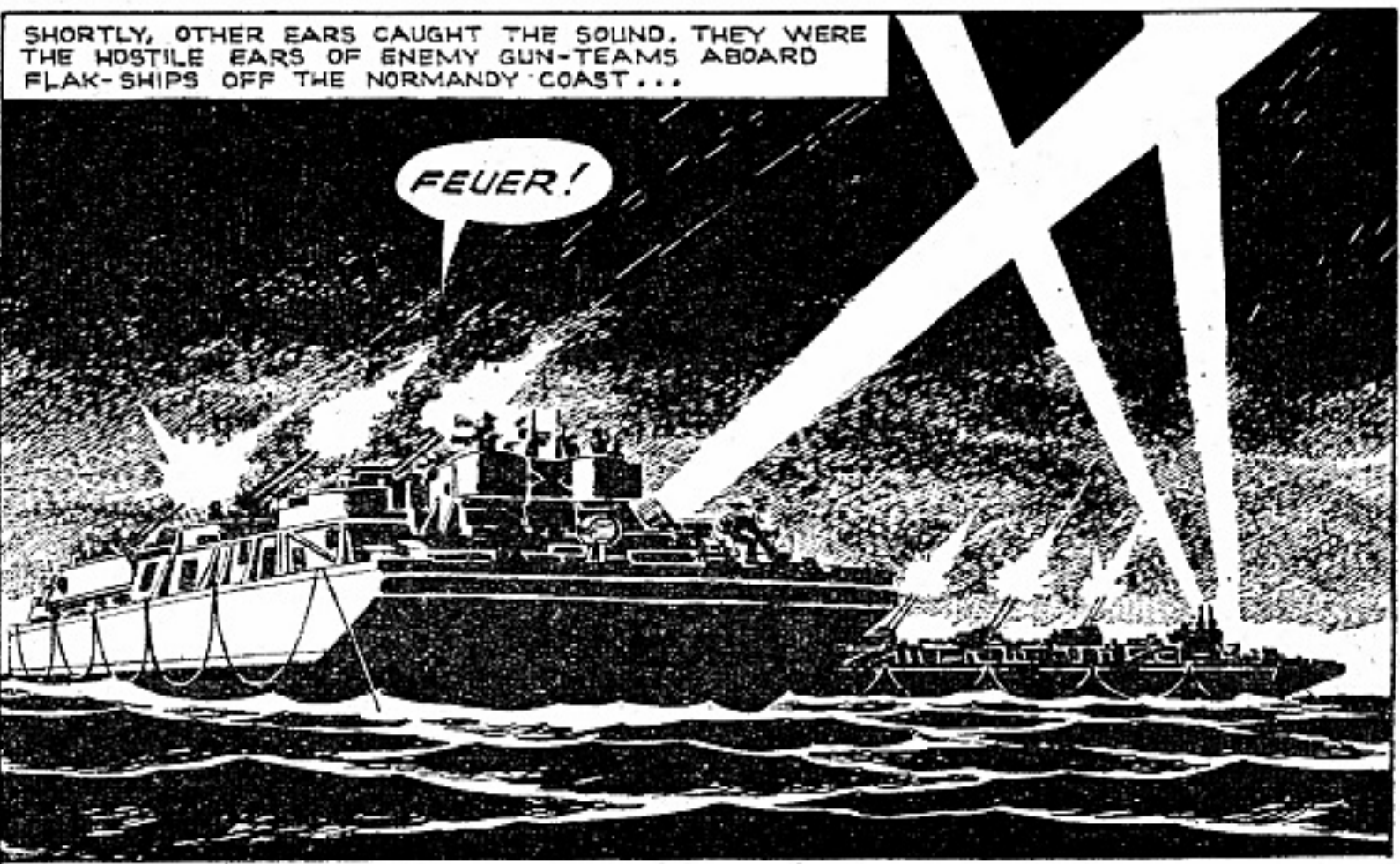
SOON THEY WERE AIRBORNE AND BEFORE LONG WERE OUT OVER THE CHANNEL. THE BLACK HEAVENS THROBBED TO THE DRONE OF ENGINES. FAR BELOW, COMMANDOS AND NAVY PERSONNEL LISTENED TO THE SOUND.

THERE GO THE PARATROOPS...
LET'S HOPE THEY DO A
GOOD JOB. A LOT
DEPENDS ON 'EM.



SHORTLY, OTHER EARS CAUGHT THE SOUND. THEY WERE THE HOSTILE EARS OF ENEMY GUN-TEAMS ABOARD FLAK-SHIPS OFF THE NORMANDY COAST...

FEUER!



TRACER-SHELLS RIBBONED UP THROUGH THE DARKNESS, GUIDED BY PREDICTION-INSTRUMENTS THAT WERE TOO ACCURATE FOR COMFORT...



YET ONLY ONE AIRCRAFT WAS HIT... BY A CHUNK OF METAL AS BIG AS A MAN'S FIST.

BY THUNDER, THAT WAS CLOSE!



FOR A FEW HAIR-RAISING SECONDS, IT SEEMED THE PLANE WAS DOOMED. IT PITCHED VIOLENTLY IN THE SHOCK-WAVE OF THE SHELL THAT HAD BURST ALONGSIDE.

SHE'S A GONNER, SIR!
HAD WE NO' BETTER
BALE OUT?

SIT TIGHT, MCWHIRTER! WE'LL
BALE OUT IF THE PILOT GIVES
THE WORD, NOT UNLESS!

THE PILOT DID NOT GIVE THE WORD. HE FOUGHT THE AIRCRAFT BACK ON TO AN EVEN KEEL. SOON, THEY WERE OUT OF THE BARRAGE. CALMLY, BRODIE CONSULTED HIS WATCH.

NOT LONG NOW BEFORE WE'RE
OVER OUR DROPPING-ZONE!
ARE THERE ANY PROBLEMS?

THERE'S JUST ONE THING, SIR. OUR PLATOON
OBJECTIVE'S A BRIDGE THAT HAS TO BE
DESTROYED. BUT WE'RE NOT CARRYING
DEMOLITION-KIT.



THE SUBALTERN DIVULGED THAT A RESISTANCE LEADER, A TRAINED SABOTEUR, WOULD BE WAITING TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THE PLATOON ON ITS WAY TO THE BRIDGE.

THE LOCAL MAQUIS WILL WORK ON THAT BRIDGE UNDER OUR PROTECTION. THE MAN WHO'LL MEET US WILL INTRODUCE HIMSELF ONLY BY HIS FIRST NAME...
"PIERRE."



PIERRE... EVEN NOW, THE MAN WHO ANSWERED TO THAT NAME WAS HIDDEN IN A CORSE, HEAD COCKED TO THE SWELLING ROAD OF THE INCOMING AIRCRAFT.

THE ENGLISH HAVE JUDGED THE TIME WELL. THE MOON IS JUST RISING.



PIERRE BONNIER NURSED A FIERCE HATRED OF THE GERMANS. A HATRED THAT WAS ONLY MATCHED BY HIS LOATHING FOR THE SCOTS... AN ANCIENT PREJUDICE THAT WAS TO BE REVIVED ON THIS FATEFUL NIGHT.

ABOVE THE LOCALITY OF ORME-SUR-MER, THE SKY BLOSSOMED PARACHUTISTS. THE VILLAGE AWOKE TO PULSATING LIFE...

OUT TO YOUR DEFENCE POSITIONS! SCHNELL! SCHNELL!



Chapter 4.

DROP ZONE

JACKBOOTED FIGURES WERE ALREADY DIVING INTO DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AS THE FIRST BRITISH PARATROOPERS HIT THE GROUND. A SPANDAU CHATTERED VICIOUSLY ...



MCWHIRTER WAS HIT AS HE STRUGGLED OUT OF HIS HARNESS. STUART NIVEN LUNGED FOR THE BREN-GUNNER'S L.M.G. ...



STUART CLUTCHED THE BREN AND MADE A
BERSERK DASH FOR THE SPANDAUF...

GOOD WORK,
NIVEN!



THE REST OF THE MEN UNDER BRODIE'S COMMAND TOUCHED DOWN
AND SWARMED FORWARD IN SUPPORT...

COME ON,
NINE PLATOON!
TEAR INTO
'EM!



WILTING UNDER THE FURY OF THAT HEADLONG ATTACK, THE GERMANS WHO SURVIVED IT BUNDLED OUT OF THEIR SLIT TRENCHES AND FLED...



FIRING HAD BROKEN OUT AT OTHER POINTS. THE FUSILIERS HAD LANDED IN FULL FORCE AND WERE HOTLY ENGAGING NAZI DETACHMENTS THAT HAD BEEN MUSTERED AGAINST THEM...



THE GERMANS WERE POURING TROOPS TOWARDS THE DROPPING ZONE AND THE BATTLE WAS BUILDING UP TO A CLIMAX.

THAT'S STOPPED THEM!
THEY'RE GOING TO GROUND!
ADJ, I'M MAKING A QUICK TOUR
OF OUR POSITION. IN PARTICULAR,
I WANT TO CHECK UP ON
NINE PLATOON!

GRABBING HIS ASH STICK, OLD DOUBLE-BARREL STRODE OFF IN THE PALLID LIGHT OF THE NEWLY-RISEN MOON. MINUTES LATER, HE WAS WITH LIEUTENANT BRODIE.

YOU SEEM TO HAVE MADE SHORT WORK
OF THE HUNS IN THIS AREA. WHAT
CASUALTIES HAVE YOU SUFFERED,
BRODIE?

SERGEANT GORDON,
PRIVATES MCWHIRTER AND
DUNCAN DEAD, SIR, I'M
SORRY TO REPORT.



THE TOUGHNESS MELTED FROM THE COLONEL'S FACE AND HE WAS SADLY SILENT FOR A MOMENT.

HOW'S THE REST OF THE BATTALION DOING, SIR?

TOO EARLY TO SAY FOR CERTAIN, BUT THOUGH EVERY MAN MAY BE NEEDED HERE, I'M SENDING YOU OFF NOW ON YOUR ALLOTTED TASK. GET BACK AS SOON AS YOU CAN.



BRODIE TOOK HIS BEARINGS AND DETAILED KNUCKLES AND STUART TO ACT AS SCOUTS...



KNUCKLES MCNEISH REACHED THE EDGE OF A WOOD... AND JERKED BACK WITH HIS LEE-ENFIELD AT THE READY AS A FIGURE ROSE FROM THE UNDERGROWTH...

DON'T SHOOT, ENGLISHMAN! ME... YOU... FRIENDS. ALL ENGLISHMEN MY FRIENDS. I AM PIERRE.



KNUCKLES LOWERED HIS RIFLE AND GRINNED AT BONNIER...

RIGHT YEZ ARE, PIERRE. BUT IF
IT'S ENGLISHMEN YE'RE LOOKIN'
FOR, YE'LL NO FIND ANY HERE.
WE'RE ALL SCOTSMEN.

SCOTSMEN? SCOTSMEN,
YOU SAY? PARDIEU,
I SPIT ON THEM!



THAT DID IT! THE BIG PARATROOPER
DROPPED HIS RIFLE WITH A
THUD... AND DROPPED PIERRE
BONNIER, TOO... WITH A FAST
CLIP ACROSS THE JAW...

SPIT ON US,
WOULD YE? TAK'
THAT, YE NO GOOD
FROG!



BONNIER WAS STRETCHED OUT COLD WHEN STUART CAME UP. HE WAS STILL SPREAD-EAGLED WHEN THE REMAINDER OF THE PLATOON GAINED THE BOGAGE...

IT'S PIERRE, SIR. FOR SOME REASON HE'S GOT IT IN FOR SCOTSMEN. FAIR INSULTIN', HE WAS. I WASNA STANDIN' FOR IT!

SUFFERING WILDCATS! THIS IS NO TIME TO START A PRIVATE WAR, MCNEISH! THAT FRENCHMAN'S IMPORTANT TO US! BRING HIM ROUND, QUICK!



THE RESISTANCE LEADER WAS REVIVED, BUT HE WAS NOT IN A CO-OPERATIVE MOOD. IT WAS ONLY BY APPEALING URGENTLY TO HIS SENSE OF PATRIOTISM THAT BRODIE PERSUADED HIM TO STAY:

EH, BIEN! I GO THROUGH WITH THE PLAN, THOUGH NOT IN GOOD HEART! I WARN YOU, IT IS BETTER YOU DO NOT TELL MY COMRADES YOU ARE ECOSSAIS...

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT. WE WON'T LET ON, IF THAT'S THE WAY IT HAS TO BE.



TRUCULENTLY, PIERRE LED THE PARATROOPERS OFF THE ROAD AND THROUGH THE UNDERGROWTH... TO WHERE THREE MORE FRENCH CIVILIANS WERE LYING IN WAIT WITH EXPLOSIVES.

THE BOCHES LOOK AS IF THEY ARE EXPECTING TROUBLE.

WITH THE UPROAR THAT'S GOING ON OUTSIDE ORME-SUR-MER, IT'S NO WONDER!



BRODIE POSTED HIS BREN-GUNNERS TO GIVE COVERING FIRE AND ORDERED HIS RIFLEMEN TO FIX BAYONETS...

MIND YE LAY IT ON THICK, STU!

RIGHT, LADS... LET'S GO!



Debt of Honour

THE LIEUTENANT BOUNDED OUT OF THE WOODS. IN ONE CONCERTED MOVEMENT, THE MEN OF THE ASSAULT-PARTY SWEEP AFTER HIM...

THEY'VE SPOTTED US!
KEEP YOUR INTERVALS!
DON'T BUNCH UP!



THE GERMANS THREW THEMSELVES DOWN AND TRIGGERED THEIR WEAPONS FEVERISHLY... TOO FEVERISHLY FOR ACCURACY. THE BREN-GUNS BATTERING AT THEM DID NOT IMPROVE THEIR AIM, EITHER!



IT WAS THE SIGHT OF THE COLD STEEL THAT TOOK THE HEART OUT OF THE NAZIS, THOUGH... MORE THAN THE THRASH OF THE BULLETS FROM THE TREES.

NO RETREAT! WE HOLD THE
BRIDGE AT ALL COSTS!
STAND FIRM!



THE COMMAND WENT UNHEEDED, EXCEPT BY A FELDWEBEL. ONLY HE AND THE OFFICER WHO HAD BELLOWED THAT COMMAND, MADE A STAND...

THAT'S THE STUFF,
DOD!



THE REST OF THE GERMANS KEPT RUNNING. WITH THE BRIDGE UNDER HIS CONTROL, BRODIE WHISTLED UP HIS BREN-GUNNERS AND CONCENTRATED HIS PLATOON...

FETCH THOSE FOUR FRENCHMEN, MURRAY.
WE'RE ALL SET NOW TO GIVE THEM PROTECTION
HERE. BUT TELL THEM TO COVER THEIR FACES ...
THEY MIGHT BE IDENTIFIED IF ANYBODY'S
SNOOPING AROUND.



DOD LOPED ACROSS TO THE WOOD AND RETURNED SHORTLY WITH THE SABOTEURS.

THESE SCOTS KNOW HOW TO FIGHT! I'LL SAY THAT FOR THEM...



BONNIER AND HIS COMRADES WENT TO WORK. WITH CHARGES PLANTED AND FUSES LIT, THEY WERE SCURRYING BACK TO WHERE BRODIE WAITED WHEN THE GRUMBLE OF HEAVY ENGINES BECAME AUDIBLE.

IT IS DONE!
NOW WE GO... AT ONCE!
SOON SHE BLOW UP!

JUST IN TIME, TOO!
LOOK! PANZERS!



THE LIEUTENANT GAVE THE COMMAND TO WITHDRAW. PARATROOPERS AND SABOTEURS SPRINTED FOR THE WOODS AS A GERMAN MACHINE-GUN STUTTERED WICKEDLY...

COME ON, DOD! CAN YE NO MOVE YER WEE LEGS FASTER THAN THAT!

GRAB HIS OTHER ARM, KNUCKLES! WE'LL HUSTLE HIM ALONG BETWEEN US!

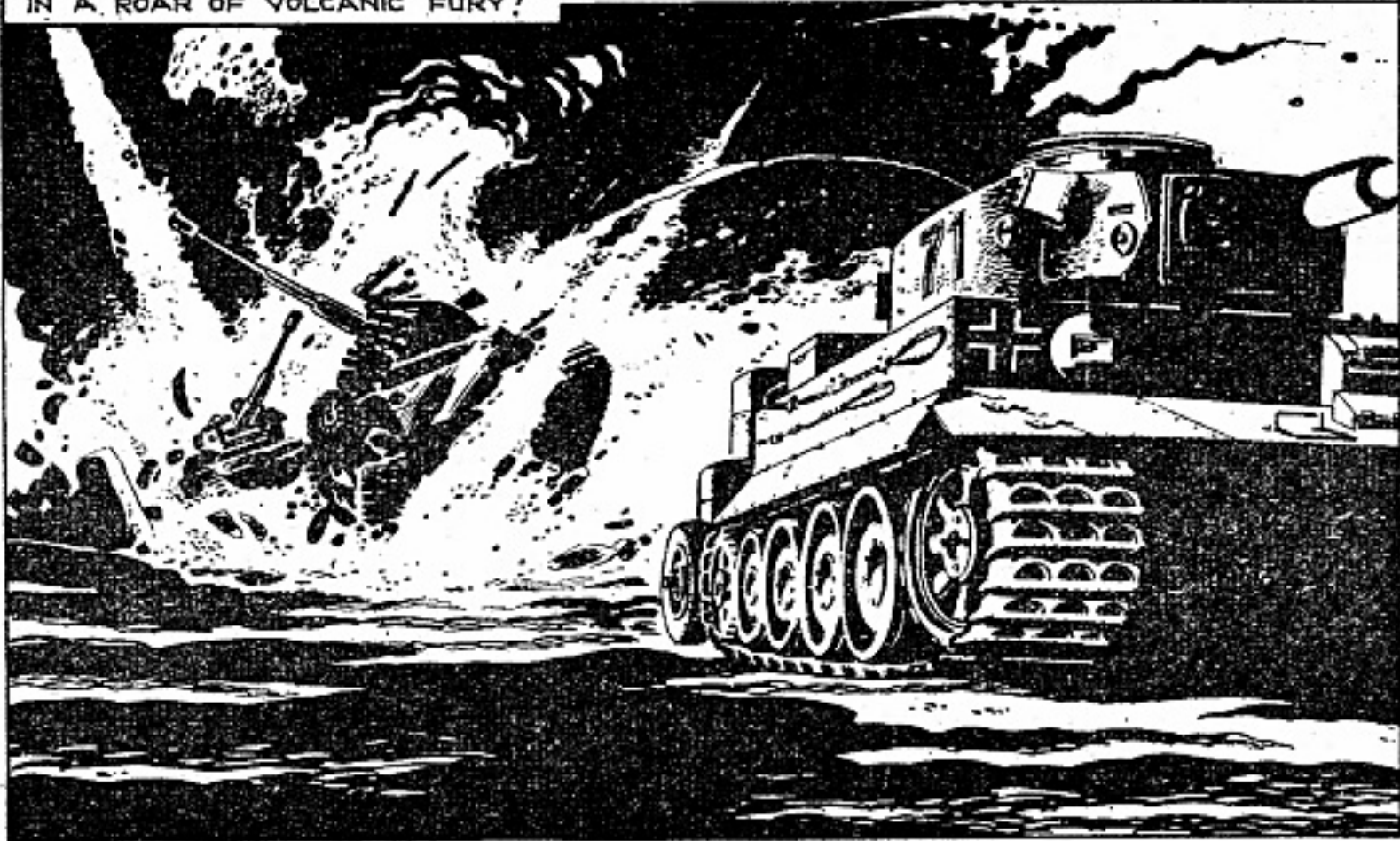


THE UNDERGROWTH WAS REACHED WITHOUT LOSS, BUT THE FOREMOST OF THE ENEMY ARMoured VEHICLES WAS ON THE BRIDGE BY THEN. IT CROSSED SAFELY...

THOSE PANZERS ARE NO ORDINARY GERMAN TANKS! THEY'RE FLAME-THROWERS!



TWO MORE OF THE IRONCLADS LUMBERED ON TO THE BRIDGE—EVEN AS IT ERUPTED IN A ROAR OF VOLCANIC FURY!



THE FLAME-THROWER ON THE NEAR SIDE OF THE RIVER CLANKED TO A STANDSTILL — AND SWUNG SOUTH. CLEARLY, ITS CREW BAULKED AT THE IDEA OF PUSHING FORWARD WITHOUT SUPPORT...

THE ONE THAT GOT ACROSS ISN'T GOING TO BOTHER US, SIR!

SO IT WOULD SEEM, NIVEN. ALL RIGHT, EVERYBODY BACK-TRACK TO THE DROPPING ZONE. THE FIRING THERE HAS DIED OUT. A GOOD SIGN, I HOPE.



IT PROVED A GOOD SIGN, SURE ENOUGH. THE FUSILIERS WERE IN UNDISPUTED POSSESSION WHEN BRODIE REPORTED TO HIS COLONEL.

SO ALL WENT WELL AT THE BRIDGE. OUR WOUNDED ARE BEING COLLECTED AND WE'RE PREPARING FOR THE MOVE ALONG THE COAST. YOUR PLATOON CAN ACT AS ADVANCE GUARD.



A STICKLER FOR TRADITION, THE COLONEL HAD SEEN TO IT THAT TWO PIPERS HAD ACCOMPANIED THE BATTALION.

WHILE NINE PLATOON SKIRMISHES AHEAD, THE MAIN BODY WILL MARCH TO "SCOTLAND THE BRAVE". THE MEN'LL LIKE THAT, ADJ. BESIDES, THE SKIRL OF THE PIPES MAY HEARTEN THE FRENCH PEOPLE ALONG OUR ROUTE.



BUT THE INHABITANTS OF ORME-SUR-MER WERE NOT HEARTENED. THE SOUND OF THE PIPES SENT THEM SHUFFLING BACK INTO THEIR HOUSES.

WHAT THE BLAZES IS THE MATTER WITH THESE PEOPLE? THE WAY THEY'RE BEHAVING, YOU'D THINK WE WERE SUFFERING FROM SOME SORT OF EPIDEMIC!



A GENDARME WHO WAS NOT A NATIVE OF THE VILLAGE PROVIDED THE ANSWER. FROM HIM, LOUDON-GUNN LEARNED THE STORY OF A DISASTROUS NIGHT, UNRECORDED IN THE ANNALS OF THE REGIMENT.

THAT IS THE REASON FOR THEIR DISLIKE OF THE SCOTS, MON COLONEL. YOU MUST FORGIVE THEM. THEY ARE SIMPLE FOLK... WITH A PREJUDICE HANDED DOWN FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION.

HANG IT ALL, IT HAPPENED THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO...



AS THE COLONEL RESUMED HIS PLACE ON THE LINE OF MARCH, THERE WERE FLASHES IN THE EAST AND THE THUNDER OF HEAVY DETONATIONS.

FROM THE SOUND OF IT, ADJ., THE COMMANDO BOYS ARE FAIRLY ON THE RAMPAGE.

THE JERRY INSTALLATIONS MUST BE TAKING A HECK OF A BEATING.



A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE GENDARME WHO HAD SPOKEN TO THE COLONEL, CAUGHT UP WITH HIM AGAIN.

MON COLONEL, THE RESISTANCE MEN IN ORME-SUR-MER HAVE RECEIVED A MESSAGE, TELLING THEM THE BOCHES YOU ROUTED ARE BEING RALLIED AGAIN.



THEY ARE? THANKS FOR THE WARNING...

THERE WAS ALARM IN THE GENDARME'S VOICE AS HE WENT ON...

WAIT! THE MAJOR COMMANDING THE BOCHE HAS NO MIND TO RISK ATTACKING YOU AGAIN. HE MEANS TO PUNISH ORME-SUR-MER BECAUSE FRENCH SABOTEURS IN THE LOCALITY CO-OPERATED WITH YOUR MEN!



SNEEPIPLY, HE WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT THE PEOPLE OF ORME-SUR-MER HAD SENT HIM TO APPEAL FOR HELP ON THEIR BEHALF...

THIS MAJOR HAS SWORN TO CORDON THE VILLAGE AND RAZE IT TO THE GROUND WITH A FLAME-THROWER! HE PLANS TO GIVE HIMSELF THE PLEASURE OF OPERATING THE FLAME-GUN PERSONALLY!

THE DEVIL HE DOES!



OLD DOUBLE-BARREL DID NOT HESITATE. NINE PLATOON WAS RECALLED AND THE BATTALION WAS ORDERED TO TURN ABOUT. RETURNING TO ORME-SUR-MER, THE PARATROOPERS WERE RAPIDLY DEPLOYED...

THE RIFLE COMPANIES HAVE TAKEN UP THEIR POSITIONS AS ORDERED, SIR. THE WHOLE UNIT'S UNDER COVER.

GOOD! THIS MAN PIERRE HAS JUST TOLD ME ANOTHER MESSAGE HAS BEEN RECEIVED. THE NAZIS ARE ON THE WAY AND SHOULD BE HERE IN A QUARTER OF AN HOUR...



BRODIE'S PLATOON WAS ESTABLISHED ALONG A DITCH. IT WAS FROM THERE THAT WATCHFUL EYES DETECTED THE FIRST SIGN OF THE ENEMY'S APPROACH...

HERE THEY COME NOW, SIR!

KEEP DOWN... AND HOLD YOUR FIRE!



GROUPS OF GERMANS FOOT-SLOGGED INTO FULL VIEW - THEN PAUSED. A TRACKED VEHICLE WALLOWED UP AFTER THEM.

THE FLAME-THROWER THAT GOT ACROSS THE RIVER BEFORE THE BRIDGE WENT UP, SIR!

YES. AND NOW THE OFFICER IN COMMAND OF THOSE JERRY INFANTRYMEN IS ABOARD IT! COLONEL LOUDON-GUNN'S AFTER HIS BLOOD.



TO THE NAZIS, THE TERRAIN BETWEEN THEM AND ORME-SUR-MER APPEARED DEVOID OF FOES. THE FUSILIERS WERE WELL CONCEALED...

THE BRITISH HAVE GONE, HERR MAJOR.

AS I SURMISED, THE AIR-DROP WAS A HIT-AND-RUN AFFAIR... A DIVERSION FOR A BIGGER RAID WHICH IS TAKING PLACE FARTHER EAST.



THE HARD-FACED MAJOR SIGNALLED THE ADVANCE TO CONTINUE. THE FLAME-THROWER ROLLED ON AND TO THE RIGHT AND LEFT OF IT, THE INFANTRY SHOOK OUT INTO EXTENDED LINE...

FORWARD! REMEMBER, IF ANY OF THE INHABITANTS MAKE TROUBLE, OR ATTEMPT TO SAVE THEIR PROPERTY, SHOOT THEM LIKE DOGS!



THE PARATROOPERS WAITED TENSELY. THE ENEMY WERE WITHIN TWO HUNDRED YARDS OF THE BATTALION'S FORWARD POSITIONS WHEN LOUDON-GUNN'S VOICE CUT ACROSS THE SILENCE IN A FULL-THROATED ROAR.

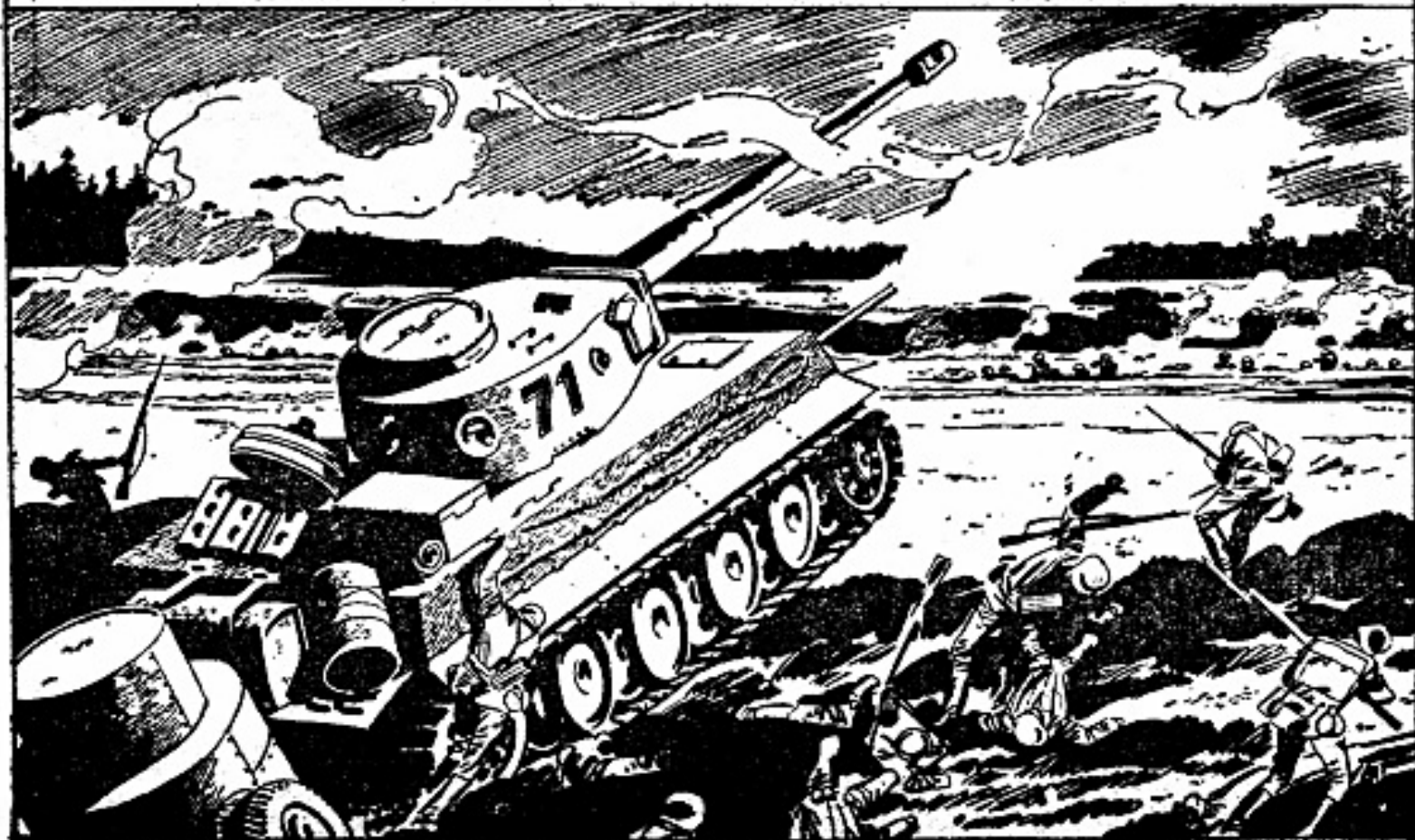
NOW! LET 'EM HAVE IT!



THE BRITISH MORTARS COUGHED OUT A SALVO. IN THE SAME MOMENT, BREN-GUNS AND LEE-ENFIELDS BARBED THE GROUND WITH SPURTS OF FIRE.



SLEETING LEAD COMBED THE LINE OF NAZI INFANTRYMEN. BULLETS SPATTERED THE NAZI IRONCLAD AND THE GERMAN MAJOR IN ITS TURRET DUCKED LOW.



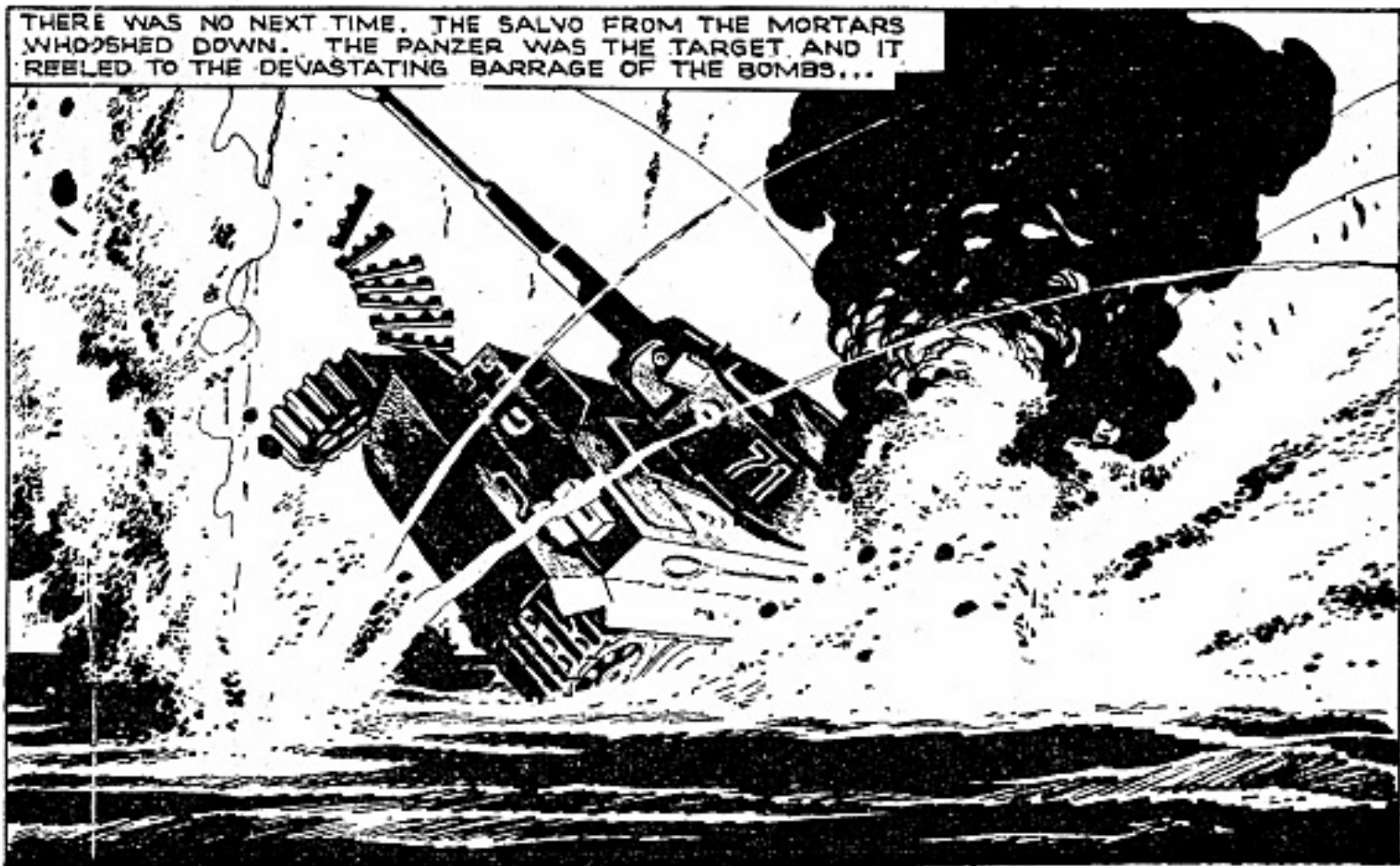
A SECOND LATER, THE PANZER BELCHED FLAME. A BLAZING TORRENT POURED ACROSS THE DITCH AS KNUCKLES, STUART AND DOD BUNDLED TO ONE SIDE. EACH FELT HIS SKIN CRAWL UNDER THE FIERCE HEAT THAT PLAYED ABOUT THEM.



IT MISSED US!

NOT BY MUCH, IT DIDN'T! AND THERE COULD BE A NEXT TIME!

THERE WAS NO NEXT TIME. THE SALVO FROM THE MORTARS WHOOSHED DOWN. THE PANZER WAS THE TARGET AND IT REELED TO THE DEVASTATING BARRAGE OF THE BOMBS...



A NEAR-MISS LIFTED IT AND HURLED IT SIDELONG. THE MEN IN IT BALED OUT FRANTICALLY... BALED OUT INTO A SECOND PULVERISING VOLLEY FROM THE HEAVIEST WEAPONS IN THE AIRBORNE BATTALION'S ARMOURY.



THE REMNANTS OF THE GERMAN INFANTRY HAD ALREADY BOLTED. THEY DISAPPEARED AND WITH ORME-SUR-MER NO LONGER UNDER IMPENDING THREAT, THE PARATROOPERS FORMED UP AGAIN FOR AN EASTWARD MARCH.


I WISH TO MAKE THE APOLOGY FOR WHAT I SAY ABOUT SCOTTISH MEN. IF ORME-SUR-MER SURVIVES THIS WAR, ITS PEOPLE WILL KNOW WHO TO THANK.



OKAY, PIERRE, NAE HARD FEELINGS, AND KEEP YER CHIN UP... UNLESS SOMEBODY TAKES A SKELP AT IT LIKE I DID!


DAY HAD BROKEN BY THE TIME THE BATTALION JOINED UP WITH THE COMMANDO UNITS FARTHER ALONG THE COAST. A MIST WAS BEGINNING TO BLANKET THE SEA AS THEY SAILED FOR HOME...

THE FOG'S THICKENING CONVENIENTLY, IT'LL ENSURE US A TROUBLE-FREE CROSSING.




PILLARS OF BLACK SMOKE FROM WRECKED INSTALLATIONS TESTIFIED THAT THE PRIMARY OBJECT OF THE COMBINED OPERATION HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED...

FROM EVERY POINT OF VIEW, COLONEL, THE NIGHT'S WORK SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS.




OLD DOUBLE-BARREL FINGERED HIS JAW MUSINGLY. YES, HE REFLECTED, AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS ... WITH A CURIOUS TWIST TO IT, AS FAR AS THE FUSILIERS WERE CONCERNED.



I WONDER IF ADAM FERGUSON'S SPIRIT WAS AT ORME-SUR-MER WHEN WE WIPED THE SLATE CLEAN FOR WHAT SOME OF HIS MEN ONCE DID TO IT. I WONDER, TOO, IF THE VILLAGE WILL STILL BE THERE WHEN FRANCE IS FREE AGAIN...

YES, ORME-SUR-MER WAS STILL THERE WHEN LIBERATION CAME IN 1944 ... AND THE VILLAGERS CHEERED TO THE ECHO WHEN A BRITISH BATTALION ENTERED IT, WITH PIPERS TO THE FORE ...



VIVE LES ECOSSAIS!

ECOSSAIS? NO, THESE WERE NOT SCOTS. THE PIPERS WORE PLAIN SAFFRON KILTS AND LIKE THE REST OF THIS BATTALION, THEY HAILED FROM NORTHERN IRELAND. BUT YOU COULD NOT EXPECT FRENCH FOLK TO KNOW THAT.

THEY THINK WE'RE PERISHING JOCKS, COLONEL!

WHO CARES? YOU TELL 'EM WE'RE NOT, MAJOR, AND I'LL HAVE THE HIDE OFF YOU. BEDAD, I'M NOT COMPLAINING... NOT WITH A PRETTY FRENCH COLLEEN ON EACH ARM...

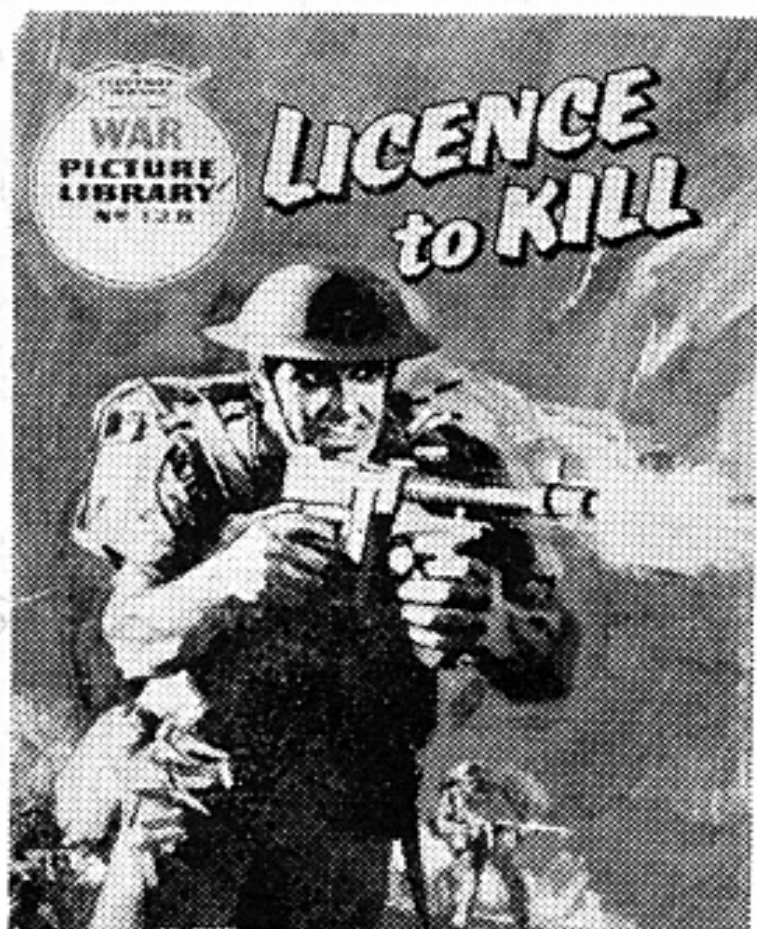


AND THE STURDY IRISH COLONEL STRODE ON HAPPILY, UNAWARE HE OWED HIS SPECIAL WELCOME TO FERGUSON'S FUSILIERS... OLD DOUBLE-BARREL WOULD HAVE BLOWN HIS TOP WITH INDIGNATION TO SEE IT!

ALSO ON SALE NOW
FOR WAR THRILLS... ACTION... DRAMA...

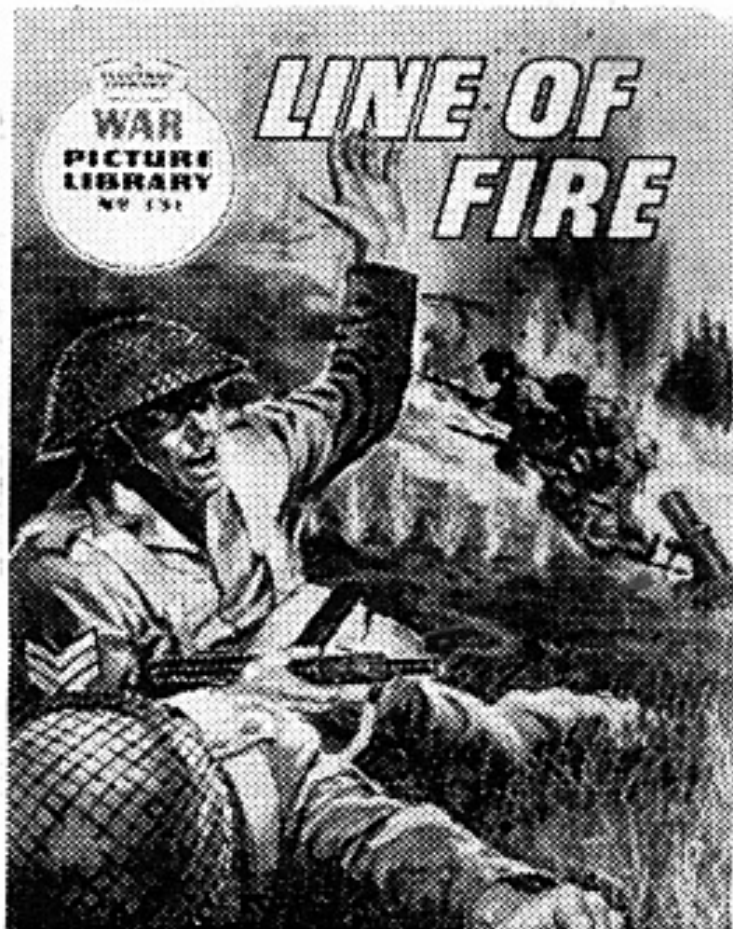
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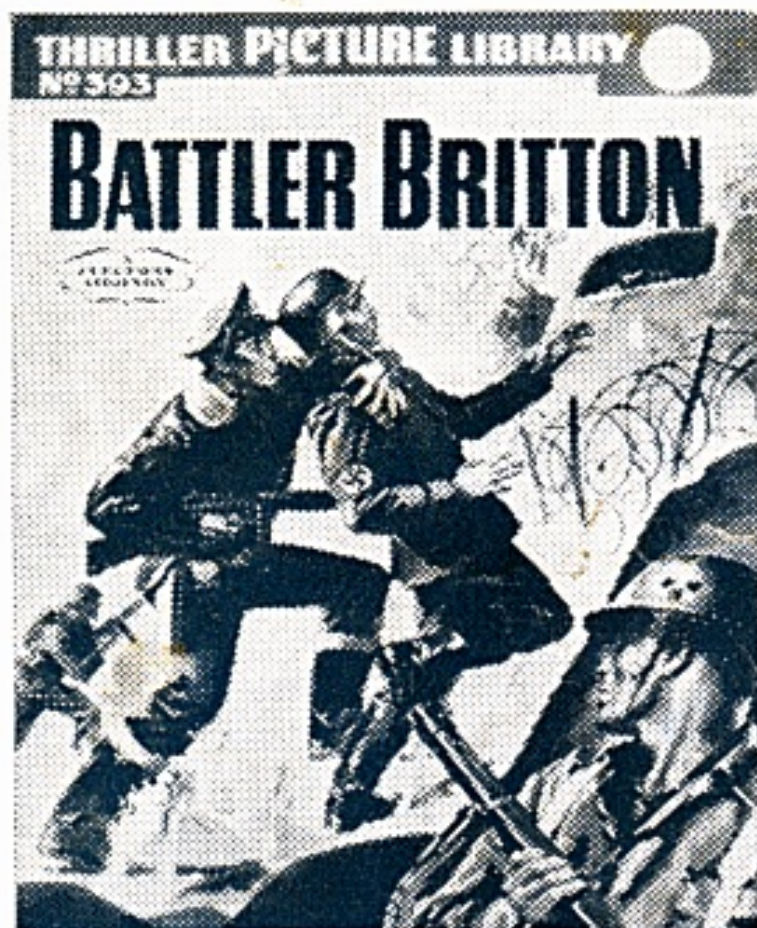
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